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# The Workshop

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## THE VIENNA EXHIBITION IN CONNEXION WITH ART-INDUSTRY.

BY JACOB FALKE.\*

### V. ART-PRODUCTIONS IN GLAZED POTTERY.

In the present day, the whole realm of pottery, as far at least as it has any pretension to art, is divided into two comprehensive groups, Fayence and Porcelain, the difference between which depends on the quality and the treatment of the material. The former, until the discovery of European porcelain, reigned supreme in Europe, if we put aside the inferior kind of stoneware and ordinary vessels: since that time, it has been almost entirely superseded by porcelain, and it is only within the last ten or twenty years that it has again come into vogue. This circumstance must be taken into considerations, if we would understand the extraordinary degree of excellence at which fayence has of late arrived, putting porcelain, as the present exhibition shows, already in the shade.

Of those countries which take part in fayence manufacture, France, England and Italy stand in the foremost rank, Sweden coming next perhaps, though with a peculiar speciality; then Portugal, Belgium, Germany and Austria, which last has however made but a modest and imperfect beginning. All these works derive their origin from the revival of the old art-fayence of which every kind of specimen has already been again attempted and imitated. Whatever, in former times, Italy, Germany, Holland, France and Sweden, nay, whatever Persia, India and China have produced, has again been taken up by the modern manufacture.

In one sense, this branch of industry has reached

its greatest extent in England, namely, in those particular objects which serve for ordinary domestic purposes. The French and Italian fayence aspires chiefly to ornament, their specimens being almost entirely of a decorative character. The English fayence, though it has imitated almost everything, has certainly overcome the greatest difficulties, and revived much of the technique which had been forgotten, but while departing most freely from the old models it is not especially happy in its freedom, in an artistic point of view. The characteristic feature of all the English manufacturers, numbers of whom have exhibited very important works, especially Minton, Mortlock, Daniell and Son, and the Royal Worcester Works, consists in this, that they, one and all, attempt every thing, while everywhere else the fayence artist has some speciality of his own. In this attempt to be universal, they too frequently outstep the limits of true art; the success of their technique, the application of a new and difficult colouring, the colossal proportions of form are more considered than beauty of form. Hence it happens, that side by side with every kind of most beautiful specimens, is to be seen an abundance of unseemly and even of hideous articles, bizarre in conception, extravagant in form and unharmonious in colour. And as these are principally of colossal dimensions, it is from them that the impression is conveyed of the grand exhibition of English fayence. To the connoisseur, or to those who witnessed the London Exhibition of 1871 but little new is presented. We may perhaps except the imitations of ivory from the Royal Worcester Works, vessels and other articles of queer Chinese forms in which the warm tint of the ivory is very successfully imparted

\* See page 179 ante.  
The Workshop. 1873.

to the material; but this is their only merit. The exhibition also of glazed tiles, the ornamentation of which till now was on the whole blameless, and even now shows some charming motives, proves also, alas! that this extravagant tendency has even penetrated into them.

The characteristic of the French fayence is that, on the one hand, it is all more or less for decorative purposes, and on the other that every individual manufacturer, or in this case to speak more properly every artist has his own specialty. With one the purely coloured ornament is the great object of his art, and in this respect Theodore Deck is decidedly the first and the most important contributor. His plates and dishes with their painted figure subjects, but especially their female half-length portraits, may justly lay claim to the name of pictures, and are entitled to a price corresponding to their pretensions. Their deep and full enamel colours are indeed of the greatest decorative beauty. This is particularly the case in his imitations of Oriental vessels. Eminent also in this Oriental genre are Leon Parvillee and Collinot, each with some specialty, the former with a somewhat freer use of Turkish and Persian motives transferred partly from walls, metal works and other decorations to the glazed earthenware; the latter distinguished by his variety, and especially by his adoption of Chinese and Japanese pottery. Others have thrown themselves into the style of Palissy, copying his dishes adorned with serpents, fishes &c. The most remarkable among these is Barbizet, who, however, is far too rococo for this style of art. Others again prefer to imitate the Italian majolica, especially the Urbino vessels with their grotesque figures on white ground, as, for example, Soupireau and Fournier in Paris. Lastly, others have attempted the revival of the special French fayence of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly that of Rouen and Moustiers, which has again become the fashion in France. In this respect E. Rousseau is to be cited. Here a doubt arises as to the real value of these objects for domestic use.

The Italian fayence manufacture has also its specialists or rather its specialty, for however important this branch of manufacture is in Italy it is constantly occupied in the imitation of its own majolicas, these wonderfully effective art-vessels of the sixteenth century, which are now held in such high estimation in the artistic world. There is a great number of artists from different localities who have devoted themselves to this imitation of majolica and most of them have again by preference one or the other specialty as, for example, Giovanni Spinacci in Gubbio, who has taken for his model the metallic glaze and iridescent works of his countryman Giorgio de Gubbio, or as Torquato Castellani in Rome who has imitated the majolicas of the first period from the beginning of the sixteenth century with the utmost possible antiquarian fidelity. Before them all, in point of beauty and variety, stands forth the old and celebrated manufactory of the Marquis Ginori in Doccia near Florence, which does not merely reproduce all the different kinds of the old majolicas, but endeavours also to modernise

them, partly by adapting them for use, partly by novel shapes, and partly by ornamenting them with modern pictures. We have nothing to say against the process itself, but the way in which it is carried out is not always successful, especially in objects of colossal dimensions.

Belgium also, like Italy, has attempted the imitation of majolicas, and indeed sometimes with brilliant workmanship, but the tone and treatment are too heavy, and they lose therefore the decorative charm of the originals.

While Portugal, where the manufacture is in the hands of a company, imitates the works of Palissy in a peculiar and extensive manner, two Swedish manufactories, those of Gustavsborg and Rörstrand have again taken up their own peculiar fayence; not without a happy result. This belongs however to the rococo period, so that this revival has its critical side. Among the German manufactories that of Villeroy and Boch in Mettlach have occupied themselves in different ways with Fayence and have been very successful in their tiles. Mehlem in Bonn and Frink's factory in Sinzig have followed in the same path. In Austria we have to notice the first attempts, by Decente in Neustadt and Klammerth and Slowak in Znaim; who have taken the old blue-white Delft patterns for their especial model.

In Porcelain the comparative review of the different countries leads to very different results. With the exception of France and England, those countries which have bestowed but little or no pains on fayence, seem especially to share the porcelain manufacture among themselves. Here Austria and Germany stand in the foremost rank, then Denmark and Russia, the latter however being only represented by the Imperial factory at Petersburg. As to Italy, Ginori in Doccia exhibits numerous specimens of a peculiar porcelain, in the style of the celebrated manufactory of Capo di monte, with delicate reliefs in colour. His modern and original articles have no æsthetic value. It seems as if his artistic powers had exhausted themselves upon Majolica. China and Japan also enter into competition in the present exhibition in this branch of industry, both important as to quantity, but in quality, artistic or technical, offering little to satisfy the eye of the connoisseur. What they have sent is all of the present, and shows the present standpoint of this branch of industry with them, but proves to us incontrovertibly that the art has wonderfully deteriorated in comparison with former times. European art has penetrated into the Japanese porcelain in which we recognise many Sevres motives. However two highly suggestive decorative features distinguish the porcelain of these countries, namely, the manner in which the articles are over-spread by ornament, and the combination of their colours.

If we would point out the general character of the European porcelain, as it is shown in the Exhibition, we should say that it is dependent, in the first place on the fayence. As the latter has appropriated to itself the larger ornamental articles, so has porcelain more and more confined itself to the more delicate and smaller objects, such as are in requisition at present for the drawing room and etagere. This is most evidently seen in

the French and English compartments, where porcelain and fayence stand side by side, the before mentioned English fayence manufacturers being also the principal exhibitors of porcelain, to whose names we must add that of Copeland, and in a certain sense of Wedgwood also, whose works stand in an intermediate position between porcelain and fayence; while the French porcelain manufacturer is quite distinct from the fayence artist.

In the French porcelain exhibition, the Sevres manufactory is either entirely wanting, or is represented only by artists and decorators, such as Worms in Paris, and in the Hall of Art, by a few, apparently older objects. Its present characteristic therefore, in consequence of the devastation it suffered in the last war, cannot be defined. The most important among the porcelain manufactories which have sent their productions to the Exhibition, are those of A. Hache and Pepin Lehalleur brothers at Vierzon. Avoiding all objects of large proportions, they show us a variety of elegant little dinner, tea and coffee services, equally graceful in shape and ornament, in the latter point approaching nearer the conventionalised and the old French flower style. Next to them, we may name the manufactory of Thierry-Paulin, while Vion and Baury (formerly the firm of Gille in Paris) exhibit some beautifully coloured statuettes in biscuitwork, which however are too much in character with the present French taste of fashion, and Brianchon aîné confines himself to his own well known specialty, the mother of pearl-porcelain (*porcelaine nacrée*). Though this is successful in several colours, the style is rococo, but it permits every possible form of vessel.

The English porcelain of the present day takes for its pattern the Sevres works of the preceding century, and is so far right in this, as it is enabled by its glass-like material to approach the tone and style of the soft Sevres productions. It is very successful in reproducing the delicate colours of that period, and their enamel, and many beautiful specimens are exhibited of that graceful type, though not altogether excellent in form. Many other objects are also very successful, for example, dinner plates with conventionalised border ornaments, some of which are decorated with gold in a new and peculiar manner. But here it is as with fayence. The general impression is injured by a variety of most absurd objects, teasaucers for example, resembling a half opened fan, and other most incongruous articles.

In the Austrian porcelain there is a decided effort to free itself from the influence of French taste, by which it was formerly exclusively ruled. The only exception is the manufactory of Fischer and Mieg in Pirkenhammer, the form of whose vessels, with their pictures of landscapes and figures, and their floral ornamentation, imitate the French style, not indeed that of the present day, as a comparison with the porcelain in the French compartment

will show, but that of some ten years earlier. The other manufactories, that of Haas and Czizek in Schlaggenwalde being the first, have taken the ornamentation of the former Vienna style in its best time as their model, only improving the shape. The influence and designs of the Architect Hauser, one of the professors at the School of the Austrian Museum is here sensibly felt. Entirely independent, from its very beginning was the manufactory of Moritz Fischer in Herend, who seems to have understood, before any one else gave it a thought, the good style of the old porcelains, as to their special peculiarities, as well as how to revive the most difficult productions of China and Japan. His exhibition is this time more splendid than it ever was before.

The royal factories of Germany, at Berlin and Meissen have in every way, a peculiar and independent character. Whereas all the other German factories are of no importance artistically considered, and more in the beaten track and in obsolete ways, the former, without question, enter on the scene with a certain grandeur, though, unfortunately, each stands apart in its own isolation. The Berlin manufactory bears the well known characteristics of that city, namely the imitation of the Antique, and gives it expression through a collection of colossal painted vases, which in spite of all the art lavished upon them, or perhaps just for that reason, are destitute of charm. Such works are scarcely suited to the times. There are many exhibitors who, in attempting to produce a peculiarly imposing impression by their works of choice, create a very contrary effect. Much more pleasing to the eye are the smaller specimens, especially the services in later rococo. The Meissner manufactory has always been celebrated for its peculiar style of rococo, and here it reappears in the main with a new edition of old works of art. At the same time it displays to our view a collection of those graceful dark blue vessels in the style of the Limoges enamel.

With both these manufactories will bear comparison the Imperial Russian factory at St. Petersburg and the royal Danish establishment at Copenhagen. The former has many singularly pretty cups and plates that bear however no particular characteristic work; the latter approaches in its style the Berlin factory, since in Copenhagen also, thanks to the influence of Thorwaldsen, a taste for the Antique prevails, avoiding, with one or two exceptions, the colossal dimensions of the Berlin works, and throwing itself, as more in harmony with the nature of porcelain, into delicate and pleasing subjects. The same may be said of the Copenhagen factory of Bing and Gröndahl, who have also exhibited very prettily decorated services with motives from the last century. Lastly we must name the biscuit work of these manufactories, as well as the Swedish ones of Rörstrand and Gustavsberg, especially the latter. The flower baskets of Gustavsberg are, as they are renowned to be, of wonderful execution.